

40 WEEKS EARL BLUMENAUER #24 Natural Disaster Mitigation and Climate Change 40 IDEAS

Background

The evidence of climate change is all around us. We have long seen the global ramifications – melting ice caps, rising sea levels, droughts, and famines – but sometimes the effects have seemed far from home. This summer, however, the effects of climate change have appeared in spades right on our door step.

- There were 23,383 heat records set so far this year in the US. That's almost twice as many as were broken last year.
- The past 12 months were the hottest on record
- So far this year, wildfires have burned more than 2.2 million acres across the country
- The heat wave that smothered much of the country in early July caused at least three dozen deaths
- Floods, tropical storms, and fires have caused hundreds of millions of dollars of damage this year and forced tens of thousands of people out of their homes.

Climatologists are slow to put 100% of the blame for these events on climate change, but those of us with open eyes and a few decades under our belts can see the changes going on around us. For example, in the 1950s it was just as common to see record low temperatures as it was high temperatures, but it is now **ten times more common to see record high temperatures, and floods and fires seem to be getting more common and more destructive.**

Scientists tell us that these extreme weather events are consistent with what we will see as the climate changes due to global warming.

Solution

In order to deal with the challenges that climate change presents, Congressman Blumenauer believes we must work both to prevent the man-made causes of climate change and to adapt to our already changing environment.

Blumenauer has been a long-time supporter of many efforts to slow down and prevent climate change including supporting legislation that invests in clean and alternative energy. For example, he has introduced legislation [to extend the production tax credit for alternatives](#). This credit would provide stability for manufacturers and consumers, preserve and create American jobs, and lessen our dependency on the fossil fuels that contribute to climate change.

Congressman Blumenauer also supports tough fuel efficiency standards and applauded Obama administration's work with the auto industry in 2009 to create new fuel efficiency standards that will save 1.3 million barrels of oil a day and cut 220 million metric tons of carbon dioxide emissions a year by 2020. Last year President Obama announced new rules that will raise average fuel efficiency standards to 54.5 miles per gallon by 2025, a move that Blumenauer strongly endorses; this will also provide huge reductions in oil consumption and carbon dioxide emissions.

In 2009, he voted for The American Clean Energy and Security Act (ACES), which would have put a cap on dangerous carbon pollution and created a mechanism to invest in clean, renewable energy sources, new technologies, and low-carbon transit. He continues to support policies that put a price on carbon, either through a cap and trade program or a carbon tax.

However, prevention is only part of the solution to the climate change crisis. Congressman Blumenauer believes we must adopt policies that mitigate and limit the damages caused by disasters in order to save lives and resources. When disaster strikes our fellow citizens, our first

instinct, based out of generosity and compassion, is to help people resettle and rebuild. But elected officials have an additional burden and responsibility to act to prevent the next catastrophe.

Relocating people directly back in the same flame or flood zone that has just been destroyed makes absolutely no sense. Instead, we must help people rebuild stronger and safer in order to break this continued cycle of destruction that causes heartbreak and tragedy again and again.

These tough but necessary decisions should be part of flood insurance reform and natural disaster policy. Congressman Blumenauer has been working to incorporate mitigation and prevention into natural disaster policy for decades. Progress in this area has been made, but not nearly what needs to be done. People continue to move into flame or flood zones seeking to live with nature and then expect government to prevent nature from what it's been doing eons. It has to stop.

Permanent climate change is not a foregone conclusion. Through this multi-pronged and holistic approach focused on prevention and mitigation, Congressman Blumenauer believes we can change the course of our future. We have the tools to combat it if we truly commit to putting shared interests above our politics, but we need to act soon to prevent more summers like this.

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